Factors Predicting Property Owners' Support of Tourism --- A Spatial Approach

Huili Hao
Center for Sustainable Tourism, East Carolina University

Patrick Long
Center for Sustainable Tourism, East Carolina University

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Huili Hao
Center for Sustainable Tourism
East Carolina University

and

Patrick Long
Center for Sustainable Tourism
East Carolina University

ABSTRACT

This study investigates factors predicting property owners' (both full time residents and second home property owners) support for tourism development in an amenity-rich mountain county in North Carolina. Different from most place-based research in tourism attitudes, this work adopts a comparative framework that investigates the spatial effects on tourism impact attitude. Factor analysis is used to reduce the number of variables in order to avoid the effect of multicollinearity and to identify the primary structural dimensions underlying the variables. The results showed that spatial effects did exist in accessing property owners' attitude toward tourism and that the spatial regression model indeed did have better performance in terms of fit, efficiency and accuracy than the ordinary least square model. The findings of the study are discussed within the context of social exchange theory.

Key Words: *tourism attitudes; tourism impacts; spatial effects; spatial regression; social exchange theory, second home effects.*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has been acknowledged as a catalyst for creating new jobs and generating revenues for local communities. It is often considered a revitalization or development tool for environmental, cultural and heritage preservation; for cultural exchange; for community infrastructure development and improvement; and for political stability (Andriotis, 2003; Ioannides, 1995; Mitchell and Reid, 2001; Saveriades, 2000; Squire, 1996). Consequently, residents in destination areas often regard tourism as a positive opportunity to strengthen their economic foundation and retain their population (Andriotis and Vaughan; 2004). Alternatively, negative attitudes toward tourism have also been found in host communities due to the environmental and socio-cultural costs (Liu, Sheldon, and Var 1987; Perdue, Long, and Allen 1990; Chen, 2000). Tourism developers, business operators and community leaders pay a good deal of attention to residents' attitudes and perceptions because changes in them can strongly influence the policy decision-making process over various tourism development stages (Eadington, 1996). This process, in turn, can affect resident's quality of life (Roehl, 1999). As a

result, numerous research efforts have been conducted investigating residents' support for tourism development.

When examining residents' attitudes and positions for a large number of spatial units (e.g., hundreds of households), there is likely a natural inclination of tourism researchers to move beyond simple descriptive analyses to raise questions such as: How might these data be modeled? And, how well can the variability in attribute values among geographic units be captured by controlling other variables? Traditionally, researchers in tourism choose multivariate regression modeling to answer such questions. Unfortunately, traditional multivariate regression approaches encounter significant difficulties when applied to analysis of spatial data. Such problems are referred to as spatial dependence or spatial autocorrelation in geography and regional science fields. When a model acknowledges the existence of spatial aspects or incorporates spatial features, it can overcome the complication of space and error dependence, improve the performance of the model based on spatial units, and provide more efficient and consistent parameter estimates. This specific study captures the spatial dependence effects by including the spatial variables within the models in order to predict property owners' support for future tourism development in an amenity-rich mountain county in North Carolina. Hence, the purposes of this study are twofold: 1) investigate factors predicting property owners' support for future tourism development; 2) identify whether spatial effects exists in factors predicting residents support for future tourism development by introducing spatial variables in the model.

The following research questions were formulated for this study:

1. Do personal characteristics of property owners predict their support for future tourism development?
2. What variables contribute to predicting property owners' support for future tourism development?
3. Do spatial effects exist in accessing property owners' attitude toward tourism?
4. Does the spatial regression model produce more accurate prediction than the ordinary least square model and thus improve statistical fit?

LITERATURE REVIEW

A substantial number of studies regarding residents' attitudes toward tourism have been conducted over the past three decades (Perdue et al., 1990; Allen, Hafer, Long, & Perdue,1993; McCool & Martin, 1994; Mason & Cheyne, 2000; Harrill & Potts, 2003; McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Huh & Vogt, 2008). When trying to explain resident attitudes toward tourism, researchers have investigated the relationship between attitudes and respondents' socioeconomic characteristics (gender, age, income and education), personal benefits from tourism, degree of community attachment, as well as residents' economic dependence on tourism. In general, there is no consistent answer to the role that socioeconomic factors play in explaining residents' attitudes toward tourism development (Perdue et al., 1990; McCool & Martin, 1994; McGehee & Andereck, 2004). It has been found that economic dependence on tourism and personal benefits from tourism have positive relationships with tourism attitude (Perdue, et al., 1990; Deccio & Baloglu, 2002).

Social exchange theory

Ap (1992) sought to answer, from a theoretical perspective, why residents expressed their attitudes toward tourism development positively or negatively, through application of social exchange theory. He defined social exchange theory in its application to tourism as "a general sociological theory concerned with understanding the exchange of resources between individuals and groups in an interaction situation" (p. 668). This theory suggests that residents evaluate tourism development in terms of expected benefits or costs experienced in return for their services, that is, ''social exchange''. In other words, residents who perceive personal benefits from tourism development express positive attitudes toward it. From a tourism development point of view, social exchange theory assumes that property owners' attitudes toward tourism are influenced by their evaluations of the actual and perceived impacts tourism has in their community (Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt, 2005). Although the majority of tourism attitude literature focuses on residents' needs, perceptions, and requests, the goal for tourism development "is to achieve outcomes that obtain the best balance of benefits and costs for all stakeholders" (Ap 1992, p. 669). Hence, second home property owners, as an important emerging and oftentimes dominant stakeholder group in many amenity-rich destination communities, should be involved in the tourism development planning and management process. Due to their substantial presence, their needs and perceptions should be considered at an equally important level as those of local residents.

Social exchange theory has been tested and confirmed through numerous studies in the tourism literature (e.g., Andereck & Vogt, 2000; Lee & Back, 2003; Perdue et al., 1999). King, Pizam, and Milman (1993) found that residents who received economic benefits from tourism were more likely to support tourism development. Perdue, Long and Kang (1995) reported that personal benefits were strongly correlated with support for tourism and the positive impacts of tourism, such as jobs and increased recreation opportunities. Studies by Andereck and Vogt (2000) and Roehl (1999), also support the concept of social exchange theory in that residents who perceived that tourism generated more jobs gave higher scores on a Quality Of Life (QOL) scale. Lee and Back (2003) found that residents who perceived personal benefits from tourism development were likely to express economic and social impacts more positively. Lee and Back (2003) confirmed the positive application of social exchange theory in their findings that tourism's positive economic impact was the most significant factor in predicting perceived benefit. Also, the positive relationship between benefit and level of residents' support indicated that residents who perceived economic impact positively perceived benefits more favorably and expressed support for further tourism development more strongly.

METHODOLOGY

Study area

This study investigated factors that predict property owners' support of tourism development in Macon County, located in the western North Carolina using a spatial approach. Macon County has a long history as a progressive leader in the growth and development of businesses with its local economy being dominated by agriculture until the 1950s. Beginning in the 1960s, Macon County became home to several manufacturing companies. During the 1980s the economy began to shift toward second home and tourism development. Since the mid-1990s, the second home market and nature-based / cultural tourism have become an increasingly

important part of the local economy. Approximately 25% of the labor force is employed in construction of second homes or the leisure / tourism industry. An important segment of the retail / trade industry is also significantly affected by tourism. The future health of Macon County is constantly being assessed by its many and varied stakeholder groups including the tourists who visit, public policy makers, business owners and operators, as well as resident and second home property owners.

Sample

The Geographic Information System (GIS) Tax Records of Macon County provided a list of the county's housing stock from which a sample was selected of both resident and second home property owners. The sample includes 2,517 second home property owners, which is the full population of single family second home property owners, and 5,483 full time / permanent property owners (50% of all resident single family property owners, randomly selected). In June 2009, members of this sample were sent a one-page cover letter inviting them to visit the study's website, insert a participant code number, and complete an on-line questionnaire. Recipients were also given an option of requesting a hard copy of the questionnaire. Follow-up postcards were mailed three weeks after the initial mailing and again six weeks after, as either a thank you or a reminder to participate in the survey. Six hundred and nine questionnaires were completed (43% being second home owners and 57% being full time / permanent property owners). Among the completed surveys, 553 were usable for spatial analysis.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for the Sample

Characteristics	**Property Owners**
Sample size (n)	553
Male persons	56.8%
Percentage Caucasian (self –identified)	95.7%
Age Distribution	
25 and under	0.4%
26-44 years	7.5%
45-64 years	57.0%
65 and older	33.4%
Income Distribution	
Less than $14,999	2.2%
$15,000 - $49,999	24.5%
$50,000 - $99,999	29.0%
More than $100,000	31.7%
Education (Bachelor's degree or higher)	70.0%

Respondents were asked to provide their perceptions about the impacts of tourism development as well as their level of support for future tourism development within the county using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*highly dissatisfied*) to 4 (*highly satisfied*), with 5 being *don't know*. Socio-demographic questions, such as gender, age, education and income, were included in order to profile respondents.

The descriptive statistics for the sample are illustrated in Table 1. Of the 553 respondents the majority are in the 45-74 age range with the largest number of respondents falling into the 45-64 age group (57%). Over 95% of the comparison groups are Caucasian and over 56% are male. Exactly 70% of the respondents have at least a college degree while over 60% of the property owners have annual median household income above $50,000.

Dependent variable

Property owners' support for future tourism development, the dependent variable, was measured by asking the respondents' level of agreement with six statements about their support for further tourism development. Exploratory factor analysis using principal component analysis was performed. Among the six items, four variables loaded highly on one factor (loadings range from 0.728 to 0.889), explaining 75% of the variance. The Kaiser- Meyer-Oklin (KMO) statistic was .754 and the Bartlett's test was significant (p=.000), suggesting that the principal component analysis was necessary and appropriate. The two items that had low loadings on the factor were then discarded from the analysis. Reliability analysis was conducted on the 4 items. The high value of Cronbach's Alpha (.885) further confirmed the validity of factor analysis. A summed scale was then created for this support for future tourism development variable.

Independent variables

Independent variables include: 1) socio-demographic factors (age, annual household income, level of formal education, and gender); 2) length of property ownership; 3) political influence (by asking respondents the level of political influence they have on issues regarding tourism where 1= not at all and 4= very much); 4) property owners' general attitude toward tourism in the community (dummy variable); 5) tourism related occupation (dummy variable); 6) environmentally sustainable tourism industry (by asking respondents' level of agreement with the statement that the tourism industry in Macon County is environmentally sustainable where 1= strongly disagree and 4 = strongly agree); 7) residential status (full time resident property owner or second home property owner); 8) property owners' personal benefits from tourism development; and 9) property owners' opinions about the positive and negative impacts of tourism, measured by a range of items.

Several composite scales were developed for the perceived personal benefits from the tourism development variable and the perceptions on the positive and negative impacts of tourism variables based on the results from principal component analyses as shown in table 2. The Kaiser-Meyer-Oklin (KMO) statistic was high and the Bartlett's test was significant (p=.000) for all three factors, suggesting that the principal component analysis was necessary and appropriate. The high value of Cronbach's Alpha (all higher than.85) for each of the factors further confirmed the validity of factor analysis. s

Table 2
Principal Component Analysis

Dimension and Factored Items	Factor Loading
Personal Benefits from Tourism Factor	
Cronbach's alpha	.874
I personally receive social benefits from tourism	.864
I personally receive economic benefits from tourism	.896
Overall, I benefit from tourism in our county	.922
KMO & Variance Explained	KMO =.720 (sig. = .000) VE = 80%
Tourism's Positive Impacts Factor	
Cronbach's alpha	.921
Tourism creates new markets for our local products	.788
Tourism benefits other industries in our county	.755
Tourism stimulates our local economy	.806
Growth in tourism will create jobs for local residents	.836
Tourism improves the appearance of our community	.783
I like tourism because it brings new income to our community	.867
Tourism helps preserve the cultural and historic identity of our area	.783
Tourism improves the image of our county's culture	.818
KMO & Variance Explained	KMO = .893 (sig. = .000) VE = 65%
Tourism's Negative Impacts Factor	
Cronbach's alpha	.887
My quality of life has deteriorated because of tourism	.767
County recreational resources are overused by tourists	.793
Our county is overcrowded due to tourism development	.868
I do not feel comfortable or welcome in our local tourism businesses	.667
Tourism increases traffic problems	.581
Tourism increases the amount of crime in our community	.755
Tourism development unfairly increases real estate costs	.733
Tourism in our County is growing too fast	.839
KMO & Variance Explained	KMO = .900 (sig. =.000) VE = 57%
Support for Further Tourism Development	
Cronbach's alpha	.885
Tourism holds great promise for our County's future	.889
I support tourism having a vital role in this county	.889
Local government should provide tax incentives to encourage private development in tourism	.821
I support new tourism facilities that will attract more tourists to my community	.728

KMO & Variance Explained	KMO =.754 (sig.=.000) VE =75%

Note: *VE means Variance Explained; KMO means Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study develops and utilizes two models for examining factors that predict property owners' support for future tourism development. The models employ both the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) and Spatial Regression approaches.

OLS model

The results show that 31 percent of the variance in the dependent variable, property owners' support for future tourism development, is explained by the predictor variables. Personal benefits, tourism's positive impacts, tourism's negative impacts, gender, general tourism attitude, tourism related occupation, and environmentally sustainable, have a statistically significant relationship with property owners' support for future tourism development. The variables personal benefits of tourism and tourism's positive impacts (positive relationships) predicted support for additional tourism, which was consistent with Perdue, Long, and Allen (1990) and others (McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Deccio & Baloglu, 2002). If a respondent perceived personal benefits from tourism, he or she was more supportive of additional tourism in the community. This finding supports the social exchange theory. Furthermore, those who perceived tourism's positive impacts were most likely to support additional tourism. Surprisingly, the results shown in table 3.1 indicated that respondents who perceived negative impacts also supported more tourism development, which contradicted what Perdue, Long and Allen (1990) and others (McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Deccio & Baloglu, 2002) found in their studies. A possible explanation is that due to the importance of tourism to the Macon County economy (approximately 25% of the labor force is employed in a tourism related job), even though many held a negative image of tourism, they also realized that the community still needs tourism for their local economy. It should be noted that the coefficient of negative impacts variable (0.099) is much smaller than that of positive impacts variable (0.27), which means the effect of positive impacts is stronger than that of negative impacts.

Table 3.1
Ordinary Least Squares Model Estimation

Variable	Coefficient	t-Statistics	p
Constant	-.906	-0.450	0.653
Personal benefits	0.180	3.878	0.000*
Tourism's positive impacts	0.276	6.938	0.000*
Tourism's negative impacts	0.099	2.100	0.036*
Age	0.035	0.886	0.376
Income	0.013	0.670	0.503
Education	-0.042	-1.085	0.278
Gender(a)	0.266	2.549	0.011*
Length of owning property	-0.004	-1.252	0.211
Residential status(b)	0.226	1.939	0.053
Political influence	0.095	1.260	0.208
General tourism attitude	-0.386	-2.283	0.023*
Tourism related occupation(c)	0.658	3.505	0.000*
Environmentally sustainable	0.170	2.311	0.021*

a. Dummy coded: 0 = female, 1 = male
b. Dummy coded: 1 = full time property owner, 0 = second home property owner
c. Dummy coded: 1 = tourism related occupation, 0= not tourism related occupation

In addition, male respondents are more likely to support additional tourism than females. Other personal characteristics, age, income and education, of property owners did not predict support for future tourism development. General tourism attitude is negatively related to support for additional tourism; in other words, those who feel that tourism development has reached the point that they wished they lived or owned property elsewhere, are more likely to oppose more tourism development than those who feel that tourism is at an adequate level. The difference between the general tourism attitude variable and the negative impacts variable appears to lie in that the former is an extreme condition. People who answered "yes" to this question could not tolerate more tourism in their community hence oppose any further tourism development while the perceived negative impacts were probably not bad enough to prevent them from supporting additional tourism and colleting the benefits tourism brought to them. The results also indicated that respondents who are in a tourism-related occupation are more likely to support further tourism than those who are not, which also supports the social exchange theory. Lastly, the more a respondent agreed that the tourism industry in Macon County is environmentally sustainable, the more likely, he or she is to support more tourism.

The OLS estimator of each multiple regression coefficient provides the Best Linear Unbiased Estimator (BLUE), assuming the following: 1) the mean of error term is zero; 2) the error terms have constant variance and are uncorrelated and normally distributed; and 3) no spatial autocorrelation exist. These assumptions may not be always satisfied in reality. When a value observed in one location depends on the values observed at neighboring locations, spatial dependence appears. There are two primary types of spatial dependence: spatial error and spatial lag. Spatial error means the error terms across different spatial units are correlated. With spatial error in the OLS regression, the assumption of uncorrelated error terms is violated.

Consequently, the estimates are inefficient. Spatial lag refers that the dependent variable y in location i is affected by the independent variables in both location i and j. With spatial lag in the OLS regression, the assumption of uncorrelated error terms is violated; furthermore, the assumption of independent observation is also violated. As a result, the estimates are biased and inefficient.

Table 3.2
Diagnostics for Hereroskedasticity --- Random Coefficients

TEST	DF	VALUE	PROB
Breusch-Pagan test	15	39.08328	0.0006227
Koenker-Bassett test	15	41.00176	0.0003196

Table 3.3 Diagnostics for Spatial Dependence

TEST	MI/DF	VALUE	PROB
Moran's I (error)	-0.027356	-1.4786080	0.1392452
Lagrange Multiplier (lag)	1	0.0252850	0.8736590
Robust LM (lag)	1	1.5746634	0.2095311
Lagrange Multiplier (error)	1	2.2771945	0.1312892
Robust LM (error)	1	3.8265729	0.0504460

Table 3.2, the diagnostics for heteroskedastocity, is a test of the variance of the error terms as the BLUE requires constant error variance. The low probabilities of the two tests (Breusch-Pagan test and Koenker-Bassett test) indicate the existence of heteroskedastocity. This is not surprising because the error variance could well be affected by the spatial dependence in the data. Table 3.3 shows six tests to assess the spatial dependence of the model. First, Moran's I score is not highly significant suggesting the spatial autocorrelation of the residuals might not be strong. However, the other five statistics in Table 3.2 suggests a different story. The Lagrange Multiplier (lag) and Robust LM-lag refer to the spatial lag model as the alternative to OLS model; the LM-Error and Robust LM-Error refer to the spatial error model as the alternative (Anselin 1988). The significant Robust LM-Error statistic suggests that a spatial error specification should be estimated next.

Spatial error model

Regression results from the spatial error model are given in Table 4.1. The residential status variable becomes significant in the spatial error model. It has a positive relationship with the dependent variable. In other words, full time residents are more likely to support more tourism in Macon County than are second home property owners. The effects of other independent variables remain virtually the same in terms of coefficient magnitude, sign and significance comparing the OLS model. Also in comparison with the results from the OLS model, a coefficient on the spatially correlated errors (LAMBDA) is added as an additional indicator in the spatial error model output as shown in Table 4.1. Although LAMBDA is not significant, the general model fit improved compared to the OLS model, as indicated in higher value of R-squared and Log likelihood in table 5. The AIC and SC in the spatial error model are slightly better (lower) for the spatial error model than for the OLS model as well, suggesting that

allowing the error terms to be spatially correlated improved the model fit, although the magnitude is not great.

Table 4.1
Spatial Error Model Estimation

Variable	Coefficient	t-Statistics	p
Constant	-.785	-0.402	0.688
Personal benefits	0.181	3.944	0.000*
Tourism's positive impacts	0.282	7.206	0.000*
Tourism's negative impacts	0.094	2. 002	0.045*
Age	0.036	0.927	0.354
Income	0.012	0.643	0.520
Education	-0.047	-1.245	0.213
Gender(a)	0.267	2.606	0.009*
Length of owning property	-0.004	-1.348	0.178
Residential status(b)	0.224	1.971	0.049
Political influence	0.110	1.488	0.137
General Tourism Attitude	-0.374	-2.250	0.024*
Tourism related occupation(c)	0.663	3.595	0.000*
Environmentally sustainable	0.171	2.379	0.017*
LAMBDA	-0.163	-1.704	0.088

a. Dummy coded: 0 = female, 1 = male
b. Dummy coded: 1 = full time property owner, 0 = second home property owner
c. Dummy coded: 1 = tourism related occupation, 0= not tourism related occupation

Table 4.2
Diagnostics for Hereroskedasticity --- Random Coefficients

TEST	DF	VALUE	PROB
Breusch-Pagan test	15	36.24206	0.0016310

Table 4.3
Diagnostics for Spatial Dependence

TEST	DF	VALUE	PROB
Likelihood ratio Test	1	2.496679	0.1140867

Table 5
Performance Comparison between OLS Model and Spatial Error Model

Model	R-Squared	Log Likelihood	AIC	SC
OLS Model	0.333	-853.719	1739.44	1808.48
Spatial Error Model	0.338	-853.470	1736.94	1805.99

The low probability in Breusch-Pagan test shown in Table 4.2 suggests that there is still Hereroskedasticity in the model after introducing the spatial error term into the model. The Likelihood Ratio Test of Spatial Error Dependence shown in Table 4.3 becomes insignificant

suggesting that the spatial effects go away after the spatial error term is included in the model. At this point, it is fair to conclude that the introduction of spatial error terms improved the model fit, as well as made the spatial effects go away.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to explore and identify what factors contribute to property owners' support of future tourism development. Gender, personal benefits from tourism, positive and negative impacts of tourism, general tourism attitude, tourism-related occupation, and environmentally sustainable tourism, all play statistically significant roles in explaining property owners' support of tourism development.

This study also maintains that spatial dependence can be a problem in assessing attitudes toward impact of tourism research even though the particular theory being explored is non-geographic. The results showed that spatial effects did exist in accessing property owners' attitude toward tourism. A major theme of this article is that the application of the spatial dependence model should be considered in any research context in which data are more likely to present spatial correlation. The spatial regression model indeed had better performance in terms of fit, efficiency and accuracy than the ordinary least square model.

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